School of Social Sciences

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I hereby declare that the short synopsis **"A Study of India's Strategic Importance in Indo-Pacific Region in 21st Century"** being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in **POLITICAL SCIENCE** under **SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES** of U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj during the academic year **2023**.

It is a bonafide record of original work carried out under the supervision of **Dr. TRIVIKRAM TIWARI** and has not been submitted in full or part to any other university or institute for a degree or diploma. Further, it is certified that the short synopsis is plagiarism-free and the repot has been submitted.

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"A STUDY OF INDIA'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE IN INDO-PACIFIC REGION IN 21ST CENTURY"

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

to

U.P. Rajarshi Tandon Open University, Prayagraj

by

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Abstract

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as the geopolitical and economic epicenter of the 21st century, with India playing a pivotal role in formative its strategic dynamics. This study examines India's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific, analyzing its geostrategic positioning, security challenges, economic partnerships, and diplomatic engagements in the context of great power competition involving the US, Europe, Russia and China.

India's Act East Policy, maritime security initiatives and participation in Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) underscore its commitment to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and military aggressiveness in the South China Sea pose substantial challenges to regional stability. The research highlights India's soft power diplomacy through cultural ties, development aid, and multilateral forums (e.g., ASEAN, IORA, and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative). The paper also addresses emerging threats such as maritime piracy, climate security, and energy route vulnerabilities, emphasizing India's role in ensuring regional security architecture.

Methodologically, the study employs qualitative analysis of policy documents, strategic reports, and expert opinions, along with quantitative data on trade, defense expenditures, and naval deployments. India's strategic autonomy, combined with multi-alignment diplomacy, positions it as a key balancing power in the Indo-Pacific. This research contributes to the discourse on Indo-Pacific geopolitics by providing a comprehensive framework to understand India's evolving role as a net security provider and a champion of rules-based order in the 21st century. The study concludes with policy recommendations for enhancing India's strategic leverage through stronger alliances, indigenous defense production, and digital infrastructure investments in the Indo-Pacific.

Keywords: Indo-Pacific, India's Act East Policy, Quad Alliance, China's BRI, Geopolitical Strategy, Multi-Alignment Diplomacy.

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Introduction

As repetitive as it may appear, one cannot deny that the centre of global power is rapidly shifting towards Asia. According to Gareis and Liegl (2016, p. 99), "the historical predominance of the West is coming to an end due to Asia's rise in world politics". As the new rising powers, India and China have become essential shapers of the changing regional order. Specifically given Japan's resurgence, and the emergence of the new geopolitical construct 'Indo-Pacific'. The rise of China's military might in the twenty-first century has made the Indo-Pacific area a focal point of power politics, but its maritime connectivity between the Pacific and Indian oceans has kept it a center of commercial activity. (Chacko, 2016; Bishoyi, (2015).

India and China are economic giants with divergent models of development and distinct external orientations. Concurrently, they are racing to increase their strategic footprints in the near and distant regions. A complex future is forthcoming where non-western entities will dominate the security landscape and give birth to new geopolitical configurations.

It must also be admitted that due to shifting geo-political and geo-economic dynamics in contemporary international relations, Indo-Pacific has acquired a qualitatively new context, orientation and importance only during the last one decade. In his speech to the Indian Parliament on August 22, 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is credited with originating this idea. He noted that the Pacific and Indian Oceans are now forming a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and prosperity, and that a border Asia that broke away geographical boundaries is now starting to take on a distinct form.

Later on, while speaking at Honolulu in October 2010 then the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton referred about it as 'a newly emerging integrated geographical and strategic reality'. In this context she explained about the US forward and deployed diplomacy along three key tracks: first; shaping the future of Asia-Pacific economy; second, underwriting regional security and third, supporting stronger democratic institutions and the spread of universal human values. Even in December 2012, at ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also described that future of ASEAN and India "is inter-linked and a stable a secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region is crucial for our progress and prosperity". Besides, Australia's 2013 Defense White Paper was the first official government document that highlighted the strategic importance of the Indian and Pacific Oceans in terms of trade connectivity and source of energy flow. Thus, on the one hand, if

India, US, Japan, Korea and Australia highlighted the importance of the newly carved out region of Indo-Pacific, then on the other hand, China was a severe critique of such development, as the latter considered such connotation is made to marginalise it in the South China Sea area in particular and larger region of Indo-Pacific in general. Hence, Indo-Pacific emerged as new contentious area among the emerging power centers in terms of its acquired geo-economic and geo-strategic space in the post-Cold war international political arena.

Review of Literature:

Conducting any type of research, review of literature is most important factor that helps the researcher to make a solution regarding his or her research problem. Literature review is not just a tool to find out a problem but also a possibility through which a better solution can be drawn.

Priya Chacko (2016) in her book "*New Regional Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: Drivers, Dynamics and Consequences*" examines the emerging geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific region. The author analyzes the various factors that are shaping this region, including the changing power dynamics, economic interdependencies, and security concerns. Chacko explores the role of major actors such as China, India, and the United States in the evolving regional order and their interactions with smaller states. The paper delves into the drivers behind the new regional geopolitics, including economic development, maritime disputes, and strategic competition. Additionally, the author investigates the implications and consequences of these geopolitical shifts on regional stability, security, and cooperation. By providing a comprehensive analysis of the drivers, dynamics, and consequences of the changing Indo-Pacific region, the paper contributes to the understanding of the evolving geopolitical landscape in this crucial area.

Chintamani Mahapatra (2020) in his book "*Rise of the Indo-Pacific: Perspectives, Dimensions and Challenges*" explores the concept of the Indo-Pacific region and examines its rise as a significant geopolitical and geostrategic entity. The paper brings together multiple perspectives from various authors to provide a comprehensive accepting of the Indo-Pacific's emergence. It delves into the historical, political, economic, and security dimensions of the region, shedding light on the diverse challenges and opportunities it presents. The authors discuss the evolving

strategic dynamics, major actors, and their policies within the Indo-Pacific, including the United States, China, India, and other regional powers. Additionally, the paper addresses key issues such as maritime security, economic interdependencies, regional cooperation frameworks, and the potential for conflict in the Indo-Pacific. By analyzing different perspectives and dimensions, the paper offers valuable insights into the complexities and implications of the rise of the Indo-Pacific as a significant geopolitical construct.

Mohan Malik (2016) in his book "*Maritime Security in the Indo-Pacific: Perspectives from China, India, and the United States*" explores the difficult dynamics of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region. The paper examines the perspectives and policies of three key actors in the region: China, India, and the United States. It delves into their respective maritime strategies, interests, and challenges, shedding light on the ways in which these countries approach maritime security issues. The authors analyze various dimensions of maritime security, including territorial disputes, freedom of navigation, resource exploration, and cooperation among regional powers. The paper also assesses the implications of these perspectives and actions on regional stability, economic development, and geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific. By bringing together the viewpoints of China, India, and the United States, the paper offers a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives on maritime security and highlights the complexities and interplays between these major powers in the region. It contributes to the scholarly discourse on the Indo-Pacific's evolving security landscape and provides visions into the strategic thinking of these key actors in the maritime domain.

Jeff M. Smith (2018) in their book *"Asia's Quest for Balance: China's Rise and Balancing in the Indo-Pacific"* examines the concept of balancing in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in response to China's rise as a major power. The paper explores how countries in the region seek to maintain a balance of power and mitigate potential security threats posed by China's increasing influence. The author analyzes the strategies and actions taken by various Asian countries to counterbalance China's power, both individually and through regional alliances and partnerships. The paper delves into the political, economic, and military dimensions of balancing, as well as the diplomatic efforts made by countries in the Indo-Pacific to navigate China's rise. Furthermore, the paper discusses the implications of these balancing efforts on regional stability, cooperation, and the broader geopolitical landscape. It draws attention to the difficulties and complications Asian nations confront when navigating their relations with

China and other powerful nations in the Indo-Pacific. The dynamics of balancing in the context of China's rise, the paper provides insights into the strategies and responses of Asian countries in the Indo-Pacific region and contributes to the understanding of power dynamics and security considerations in this important part of the world.

Roy Medcalf (2020) in his book "*Contest for the Indo-Pacific: Why China Won't Map the Future*" delves into the geopolitical competition taking place in the Indo-Pacific region, with a particular focus on China's role and its implications for the future. The paper challenges the notion that China will inevitably shape the future of the Indo-Pacific according to its own interests. Medcalf argues that despite China's growing influence, the region is characterized by complexity and contested power dynamics, with various actors vying for influence. The paper examines the motivations, strategies, and actions of different countries and regional alliances in response to China's rise. The author highlights the challenges and constraints China faces in attempting to dominate the Indo-Pacific. The paper explores factors such as regional power dynamics, divergent interests among countries, and the strategic responses of other major players, including the United States, India, and Japan. By presenting a nuanced perspective, the paper suggests that the future of the Indo-Pacific will not be solely determined by China's ambitions, but rather shaped through a dynamic and contested process involving multiple actors. It provides a critical analysis of the geopolitical contest in the region and offers insights into the potential outcomes and implications for the future of the Indo-Pacific.

Jagannath P. Panda (2019) in his book "*India and China in Asia: Between Equilibrium and Equations*" explores the complex dynamics of the India-China relationship within the Asian context. The paper delves into the equilibrium and equations between the two countries as they navigate their bilateral ties, regional influence, and global aspirations. The authors analyze various dimensions of the India-China relationship, including political, economic, and security aspects. They examine the historical, cultural, and strategic factors that shape their interactions, as well as the challenges and opportunities presented by their growing influence in Asia. The paper also explores the dynamics of competition and cooperation between India and China across different domains, such as trade, investment, border disputes, and regional initiatives. It highlights the efforts made by both countries to maintain stability, manage differences, and explore areas of collaboration in pursuit of their respective interests. The authors discuss the implications of the India-China relationship for the broader Asian region, including its impact on regional security, economic integration, and geopolitical dynamics.

Jo Inge Bekkevold and S. Kalyanaraman (2020) in their book "*India's Great Power Politics: Managing China's Rise*" focuses on India's strategic considerations and approaches in managing China's rise as a major global power. The paper examines India's response to China's growing influence and explores the dynamics of their bilateral relationship. The authors analyze India's great power aspirations, its foreign policy objectives, and the strategies employed to navigate its relations with China. They delve into various dimensions of India's engagement, including political, economic, and security aspects, and examine the challenges and opportunities presented by China's rise. The paper also explores the complexities of the India-China relationship, including border disputes, trade imbalances, and competition for regional influence. It highlights India's efforts to balance its own interests while managing potential tensions with China. The authors discuss India's diplomatic initiatives, regional partnerships, and military capabilities in response to China's rise. The paper examines India's engagement with other major powers, such as the United States, and explores the implications of these relationships for India's management of China's rise. It considers the geopolitical and strategic implications of India's actions in the broader international context. Providing insights into India's great power politics and its approach to managing China's rise, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region. It offers valuable analysis for policymakers, scholars, and observers interested in India's foreign policy and its interactions with China as a rising power.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study on A study India's strategic importance in Indo-Pacific region in 21st Century encompasses a comprehensive analysis of India's foreign policy, regional engagements, and evolving strategic priorities. The study will examine significant events, policy shifts, and milestones in India's engagement with the Indo-Pacific region during the specified period. This will include an exploration of major initiatives, agreements, and strategic partnerships undertaken by India to enhance its regional presence.

The study will examine how the Indo-Pacific region's changing geopolitical dynamics affect India's strategic significance. This will entail evaluating how key powers—including the US, China, Japan, and Australia—interact with India to shape the balance of power in the area. The study will evaluate India's Indo-Pacific regional security issues, such as territorial conflicts,

maritime security, and non-traditional security concerns. India's responses, such as defense cooperation, naval presence, and participation in regional security frameworks, will be examined. The study will examine India's involvement in Indo-Pacific multilateral organizations, such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Quad framework. It will evaluate how these interactions affect India's strategic clout. The study will conclude with an assessment of the future prospects and challenges for India's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region. It will identify potential opportunities for further engagement and analyze the potential obstacles and constraints India may face. The study will utilize a combination of qualitative research methods, including analysis of primary and secondary sources, policy documents, scholarly literature, and relevant data. The analysis will be based on a chronological approach, covering the period from 2008 to 2022, to capture the significant developments and trends in India's strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

Research Questions

1. What are the key drivers and factors that have contributed to India's rising strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific region?
2. What role has India played in shaping regional security architectures and multilateral institutes in the Indo-Pacific region?
3. How has India's engagement with major powers, such as the United States, China, Japan, and Australia, influenced its strategic positioning in the Indo-Pacific region?

Statement of Problem

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a critical geopolitical and geo-economic arena in the 21st century, characterized by its strategic maritime routes, economic dynamism, and great power competition. India, with its central geographic location, growing economy, and expanding military capabilities, is increasingly recognized as a pivotal player in shaping the region's security and stability. However, the complexities of India's strategic role in the Indo-Pacific remain underexplored. The region faces challenges such as China's assertive maritime

expansion, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), maritime security threats, and the evolving dynamics of multilateral frameworks like the Quad and ASEAN-led mechanisms.

While India's initiatives, such as the Act East Policy and Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), signal its ambition to be a net security provider and economic partner, several issues complicate its strategic influence. These include resource constraints, regional rivalries, particularly with China and Pakistan, and the need to balance strategic autonomy with partnerships with global powers like the United States. Existing studies often focus on isolated aspects of India's role—such as its naval strategy or economic engagements—lacking a comprehensive analysis that integrates geopolitical, security, economic, and diplomatic dimensions.

This research seeks to address the problem of understanding India's strategic importance in the Indo-Pacific by examining how its geographic, economic, and diplomatic strengths can be leveraged to enhance regional stability, and identifying the challenges that hinder its ability to assert influence. The study aims to fill the gap in holistic analyses of India's role, providing insights into its contributions to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific amidst a rapidly shifting global order.

Research Objectives

Three basic research objectives form the basis of the study and give the complete researcher guidance in a logical order. Thus, the three following research goals have been met by the study.

1. To analyse internal and external factors for India's strategic importance in Indo-Pacific region.
2. To analyse India as a security actor in the Indo-Pacific region.
3. To analyse India's strategic relation with major powers.

Research Methodology

In order to conduct in-depth investigations and gain an understanding of the new regional security actor that India is emerging in the Indo-Pacific, the research has adopted a qualitative research methodology, which is always dependent on the nature of the study. This research aids in the understanding of the changing regional security phenomenon in the Indo-Pacific region. Data collection for this study will primarily come from books, research articles, newspapers and if necessary online sources also and Libraries of Allahabad University, Delhi University and JNU University will be visited for the purpose of data collection. In order to comprehend the in-depth analysis of the developing Indo-Pacific regional phenomena and India's broader security perspective, particularly in the IOR, the entire research is thus predicated on interpretative research paradigms.

Tentative Chapterisation

Introduction

Chapter I : Historical background

Chapter II : India's Emerging Strategic Importance

Chapter III : Rising China Dominance in Indio-Pacific region.

Chapter IV : Opportunities and Challenges

Conclusion

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Submission Information

Author Name	Lovepreet Singh
Title	A Study of India's Strategic Importance in Indo-Pacific Region in 21st Century
Paper/Submission ID	3655599
Submitted by	trivikramtiwari@gmail.com
Submission Date	2025-05-23 14:49:23
Total Pages, Total Words	13, 3404
Document type	Synopsis

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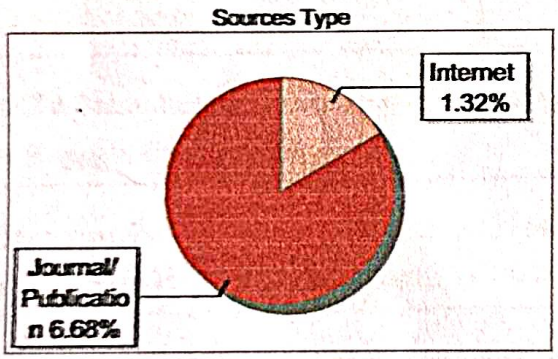

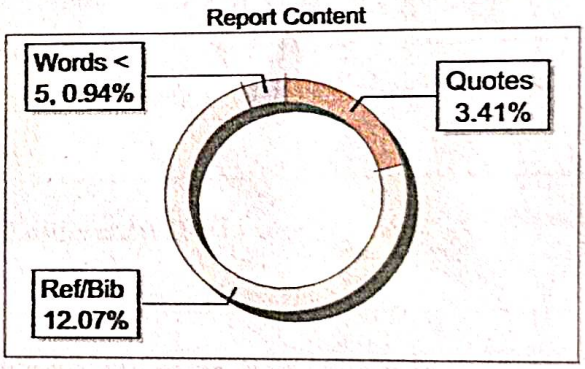

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